

Boxwoods and Beyond:

Bishopville Artist Takes Bushes to New Heights

By Marc Rapport

PEARL FRYAR ONLY WANTED TO WIN A “YARD OF THE MONTH” AWARD FROM HIS LOCAL GARDEN CLUB WHEN HE FIRST TOOK UP HIS CLIPPERS.

Instead, it launched a career that in 10 years has seen the now-retired Bishopville factory worker become one of the nation’s preeminent creators of topiaries, and his three-acre place a magnet for lovers of the unusual in plant art.

Fryar didn’t even know what topiary was when he made his first creation out of a \$2 plant plucked from the discard pile at a local nursery. He sure does now. Fueled by notice from a 30-foot creation (carved from a Leyland cypress) placed at the State Museum in Columbia, his fantastically shaped bushes and trees have landed him on PBS, HGTV, in major gardening magazines and at garden shows and museums around the country.

Fame hasn’t gone to his head. Fryar has a booking agent if you want him to come and lecture, and a parking lot had to be created across the street from his house to handle tour buses, but if you want to just stop by and look around, please do.

“I don’t charge anything. Just have a donation box if you want to leave something,” he said. “But call ahead if you have a group and you want me to give a tour of the place. I’ll be glad to if I’m around.”

Looking around can take some time. There are some 400 pieces of topiary, and more than just plants are now taking fantastic shape around Fryar’s garden. A visit to the Whitney Museum of Art in New York City with Paula Lafitte, former curator for the State Museum in Columbia, SC, convinced him that what he does is really art. This visit also got him interested in the kinetic sculpture of Alexander Calder, and Fryar is using discarded metal to make “junque art” that, as he says, “can actually do something,” in this case, serve as garden fountains.

The self-taught artist also is working on a children’s garden and a place to hold weddings at his home and gardens, located just off US 15 (I-20 Exit 116).

And, yes, he won his “yard of the month” award.

“They consider me a professional now, and I’m not eligible anymore,” he adds with a chuckle.

Find out more...

Fryar’s Topiary Garden
803-484-5581

www.fryarstopiaries.com



www.DiscoverSouthCarolina.com